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ABSTRACT

This handbook gives the adult student information to complete portfolios that are designed to help adult students earn college credits for outside experience. Portfolio assessment is a flexible and efficient way to earn college credit. Nearly any area of learning can be converted into credits as long as it is taught at a regionally accredited college or university and the student can prove expertise in the subject. The portfolio is a collection of data assembled in an approved format to demonstrate college-level knowledge for the award of credit. The five steps in putting a portfolio together include: (1) taking an inventory of one's knowledge; (2) choosing the area for which one wants college credit; (3) finding course descriptions to match one's learning; (4) providing evidence of one's knowledge; and (5) describing what one knows and how one knows it. Other aspects of the portfolio assessment process are described, including fees and policies of the college. Examples of narratives are provided, and the registration form and course selection cover sheets for applying to the Thomas A. Edison State College in Trenton (New Jersey) are included. (SLD)

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PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT HANDBOOK

Thomas A. Edison
State College

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1990-1991

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INTRODUCTION

This handbook is designed to help you complete the kind of portfolios that will work best for you, based on the knowledge you have, the proof you can offer and the college credits you want or need. It provides information to guide you through each step of the process as well as helpful hints, samples of effective portfolio entries and brief stories about successful portfolio applicants from various fields of study. In addition, the handbook offers easy-to-locate facts about the assessment process, registration, fees, time frames and program guidelines.

Reading through the following pages will help you decide whether the portfolio assessment program meets your particular needs. If you decide it might be worthwhile for you, the Office of Testing and Assessment invites you to apply by returning the application form in the Portfolio Assessment brochure.

The first portion of this handbook, the section of blue pages, contains the basic information needed to produce a portfolio. This section is brief and gives you only an overview of the process. The second portion of the handbook, the section of white pages, provides you with further explanation and helpful examples.

AN OVERVIEW OF PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT

Portfolio assessment is a flexible, efficient way of earning college credits for what you have learned outside the classroom. Through its Office of Testing and Assessment, Thomas A. Edison State College has already helped thousands of adults save countless tuition dollars and classroom hours by earning credits based on their knowledge. Moreover, these credit awards are honored by many other colleges and universities throughout the country.

Like all programs offered by Edison State College, portfolio assessment operates on the belief that college-level learning, no matter how it is gained, deserves college credits. Therefore, nearly any area of learning can be converted into credits as long as **a) it is taught at a regionally accredited college or university** and **b) you can prove your expertise in it.**

A portfolio is a compilation of data assembled in an approved format to demonstrate college-level knowledge for an award of credit. The portfolio you submit to Edison State College will serve as proof of your expertise and the value it has in the academic world. It can include knowledge or skills gained from a wide variety of sources, but these are some of the more common ones used for portfolio assessment:

* **full or part-time jobs**
* **independent reading and study**
* **training programs or in-service courses**
* **volunteer work**
* **cultural and artistic pursuits**
* **hobbies and recreational pastimes**
* **community or religious activities**
* **military service**
* **travel**

Putting your portfolio together is a simple, five-step process:

1. **Take inventory of your knowledge.**

   Review your job history, hobbies, areas of study or special training, volunteer work and other activities noted above. Then make a list of all of the areas of knowledge and skill you have acquired as a result of these experiences. (For more information, refer to "Taking Inventory," p. 8).

2. **Choose the areas for which you want to seek college credit.**

   Evaluate each area of your prior learning to determine which ones to select for portfolio assessment. Your decision about each subject area should be based on two factors: whether you can prove that your knowledge is equivalent to a college-level course and whether you need college credits in that subject. (For further explanation, see "Choosing Subjects For Your Portfolio," p. 11).

3. **Find course descriptions to match your learning.**

   For each subject you have chosen, search through catalogs from regionally accredited colleges to locate a description of an actual course that best

reflects your knowledge. The catalog entries you select must represent courses taught in semester hours (**not** quarter hours) at regionally accredited colleges or universities. **You are encouraged to review course descriptions from Edison State College's course data base before undertaking a catalog search.**

With the exception of physical education, field experience, student teaching, cooperative study, or independent study, any college-level subject is eligible for portfolio assessment. **Make certain your selected courses have been approved by the Advisement Center for your degree program plan or certificate program.** (Refer to "Locating Course Descriptions," p. 14).

4. **Provide evidence of your knowledge.**

Assemble a package of material that documents your knowledge of the subject. This may include samples of your work, letters of verification from employers or others who have first-hand knowledge of your abilities, notes taken in training courses, transcripts, an annotated bibliography or any other material that offers proof. If solid evidence is lacking, you may wish to request an examination from the assessor. Exams may be oral or written, depending on the subject matter and preference of the student or requirements of the assessor. (See the chapter, "Selecting Evidence," p. 22).

5. **Describe what you know and how you learned it.**

Write a narrative that outlines your learning, explains how it was acquired and introduces the materials you are providing as evidence. This statement, which may be anywhere from three to ten pages in length depending on the type of course involved, is your forum for persuading the assessor that you have accumulated enough knowledge to warrant credit for the subject. Portfolio advisors encourage students to submit a rough draft of the narrative, prior to final submission, so they can review it and provide useful advice. (For further explanation, see "Writing Your Narrative," p. 26).

After you have completed these steps, you should be ready to assemble your information into portfolios. Each subject must be packaged in a separate folder or binder, except in cases where courses are closely related. The course description should be placed at the front of your portfolio, followed by the narrative and, finally, your evidence. A table of contents also might be useful.

Your portfolio should then be mailed to your Portfolio Advisor. The advisor reviews it and, if it appears to be complete, notifies the Edison State College Bursar's Office to bill you for portfolio assessment fees. Current fees are listed in the Portfolio Assessment brochure.

Your correspondence should be directed to your advisor at:

Office of Testing and Assessment
Thomas A. Edison State College
CN 545
Trenton, NJ 08625
(609) 984-1141

FAX # 1 609 984-1193

Once your bill is paid, your portfolio advisor will forward the portfolios to a faculty assessor for review.

Each portfolio is assessed by a faculty expert in that particular subject. If the assessor determines that your knowledge of the subject is college level and is equal to a grade of "C" or better, then he or she will recommend that you receive credit. If your knowledge is judged to be insufficient, the faculty assessor will deny credit. If the assessor decides that more information is needed in order to make a recommendation, you may be asked to submit additional evidence, take an examination or be interviewed by the assessor. The latter practices are often used in cases where students have acquired knowledge of a subject that cannot be documented. In fact, portfolio applicants can offer to take an examination at the outset if evidence cannot be obtained. (Please refer to "How Credit Awards Are Made," p. 42, "If Further Information Is Required," p. 45, and "Appealing A Denial Of Credit," p. 46).

There is no limit to the number of credits you may attempt to earn through portfolio assessment. In some cases, students have earned enough portfolio credits to fulfill most of their degree requirements.

The time frame for three credits of portfolio assessment is generally one to two months, but the process may take longer if more information is needed from the applicant or if an assessor is not available immediately. (See "Time Frame For Assessment," p. 47).

Once a credit award is recommended, you will receive a credit award report. If you are a student at another school, you should request, **in writing**, an Edison transcript be sent to your home institution.

FORMAT: PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

After you have selected a course description, written an appropriate narrative and collected sufficient evidence to prove your knowledge to the faculty assessor, your portfolio is complete and ready for packaging.

Each course requires its own folder or binder, since not all of your courses may be reviewed by the same assessor. The exceptions are courses which are part of a series or within the same cluster (such as Elementary Spanish I and II). If you are uncertain as to whether your courses are closely linked enough to be packaged together, check with a portfolio advisor.

All information in your portfolio should be typewritten, double spaced, and each page should be numbered. The materials in your portfolio should be arranged in the following sequence:

1) **Portfolio cover sheet** with a clear photocopy of the course description taped to the space provided on the form

2) **Table of Contents** listing all items included in the portfolio (recommended, but not required)

3) **Narrative** written clearly and grammatically

4) **Evidence** organized in the sequence in which it is mentioned in the narrative and preferably numbered or otherwise labeled.

Once it is submitted the portfolio will be considered an academic record which belongs to Edison State College. At that point, it cannot be returned to you. Therefore, **be sure to keep a copy of each item in the portfolio for your own records, and do not send any original documents which you may need in the future.**

Notes for Edison State College Students

If you are a student at Edison State College, you probably have a good idea of how your portfolio credits can be used -- particularly if you have received a transcript evaluation or completed a program plan already. **You must check with the Advisement Center, however, to be certain that the subjects you have chosen are applicable to your degree program.**

Before undertaking a portfolio, Edison State College students who have fewer than 24 credits are required to take the New Jersey Basic Skills exam if they are residents of the state. Edison State College students who have no credits when they enroll are encouraged to take a few conventional college courses before pursuing credits through portfolio assessment; this helps students understand the nature of college-level learning and the level of expertise that is expected of college students.

Notes for Students From Other Colleges

If you are enrolled in or plan to apply to another college, make sure all the credits you could receive through portfolio assessment will be accepted. Policies regarding portfolio credits vary widely among colleges, and you may encounter special guidelines. For example, some institutions may honor portfolio assessment credits only for certain types of courses.

Be sure to verify the policy of your college before starting your portfolio.

In addition, obtain approval from your academic advisor, dean, or department chairperson to be certain that the credits you earn will be applicable to the degree or other credential you are pursuing. You should obtain this approval in writing.

All students in portfolio assessment should submit an Edison State College Application, even if they are not seeking a degree at Edison. Students not seeking a degree at Edison should check off "credit banking" on the College application.

TAKING INVENTORY

You have accumulated a tremendous amount of knowledge during your lifetime -- from other people, work, books, hobbies, the media and many other sources. If you are like most people, you take much of your learning for granted. Therefore, taking stock of what you know is the best way to begin the portfolio process.

Getting started may be the most difficult part. The following three-step inventory may be helpful.

Step 1 - Make a list of jobs you have held, including full-time, part-time and volunteer work. Under each job, note your duties and any skills or expertise that came into play in performing those tasks.

Step 2 - List your experiences in the following areas:

community/religious activities
club/organization memberships
military service
training programs or non-credit courses
hobbies/recreation
cultural pursuits
independent study or research

Step 3- List all your skills and areas of knowledge that come to mind, including any of the following:

Office skills: accounting, computers, office management
Artistic talent: painting, music, dancing, photography
Mechanical ability: car repairs, equipment maintenance
Technical skills: electrical work, carpentry, drafting
Language ability: foreign languages, sign language
Health-related skills: first aid, CPR
Communication skills: writing, public speaking
Interpersonal skills: teaching, counseling, public relations
Areas of reading/study: history, science, politics

Note the knowledge or skills involved in each job and experience. If any new ones have emerged, add them to your list.

This inventory should give you a fairly accurate picture of what you have learned on your own over the years.

Using your lists as a reference, you can start to browse through college catalogs and the Edison course data base to find out how the knowledge you have equates to the subjects taught for academic credit.

* *

Keep in mind that it is not your experience that is important but **what you have learned from the experience.** Consider the following cases:

* Linda lived in France for four months while her husband was on a special assignment there. To prepare for the trip, she studied French for several months with the aid of books and cassettes. Her proficiency in the language, both spoken and written, improved steadily throughout her stay, and she has remained fluent. In addition, she developed an interest in French art, music and history. She spent a lot of time going to museums and concerts, and she has read extensively about French history and culture.

* Jim is a jazz musician whose band toured France for an entire summer. He stayed mostly in rural guest houses and became fairly conversant in French. An amateur photographer, he spent much of his time taking pictures of the countryside and people he encountered, and eventually he sold a dozen pictures to newspapers and magazines. He continues to sell photographs as a second job.

* Claire, who is employed by an international chain of hotels, was transferred to France for eight months. She stayed at the hotel where she worked and socialized mainly with her co-workers. Since both the hotel staff and her acquaintances spoke English, she opted not to study the language. Although she visited a few museums and landmarks, she spent most of her time shopping or at the hotel's gym, pool and other recreational facilities.

From this preliminary information, it appears that, although Claire spent the most time in France, no college-level learning resulted from her travel. Claire, then, would not expect credit. Linda, on the other hand, seems likely to earn credits for her command of the French language as well as her knowledge of the country's history and art. With professional credentials as a musician and photographer, Jim may merit credits in both these subjects; but the French he learned on the trip may not qualify him for credits, especially if he has not used it regularly since.

* *

WHAT COLLEGES ARE TEACHING

Higher education covers a wide range of topics. Anything from bicycle maintenance to Oriental horticulture to clothing alteration might show up in the pages of a college catalog.

Areas of learning can turn into college-level courses for any number of reasons such as consumer demand, changes in the job market, social trends or economic conditions. A subject may suddenly become available at colleges across the country because it is needed for entry into a newly popular field of employment. A few neighboring colleges may add on elective courses in a subject of local interest, possibly related to the area's history or leading industry.

Some courses have been taught in colleges for hundreds of years while others may be quite new. Because the elevation of subjects to the college level is so unpredictable, often the only way to find out if your knowledge is part of a college curriculum is to start reading through catalogs.

Whether a subject is taught in millions of classrooms or only one, however, the Office of Testing and Assessment considers it college-level as long as it is **taught for credit at a regionally accredited college or university.** The course description you include in your portfolio will serve as proof that your area of learning has attained the status of a college-level subject.

CHOOSING SUBJECTS FOR YOUR PORTFOLIO

Taking inventory of what you know and comparing it to what colleges are teaching has probably given you some ideas about which subjects might be appropriate for your portfolio. The next step is the actual selection process -- determining the subjects in which **you can demonstrate your knowledge, and need to meet degree or certificate requirements.**

Examine the breadth and depth of your knowledge in each subject area.

> **Example:** You have always been interested in American history, have done some reading on the subject and listed it in your inventory of knowledge. Have you read and retained information about all periods of American history, or is your knowledge focused mainly on one period or event? Can you recall most major names, dates and incidents or only a few unrelated ones that interested you? Are you able to analyze events and cite significant political, economic, and social trends? If you review your learning, you may find that it is not sufficient to comprise a college course, or is too specialized for the course you had in mind.
>
> Your knowledge of American history may consist mainly of information about the Industrial Revolution or notable women or the development of political parties throughout the years. If you cannot find a course covering that material only, it is time to move on to the next subject.

The second issue, the usefulness of your credits, calls for a review of your goals. You will use different criteria for selecting portfolio subjects depending on whether you:

-- are pursuing a particular degree or certificate

-- want only the satisfaction of earning some credits for your expertise.

While portfolio assessment is an efficient and economical way of getting educational credentials, earning credits that will not help or enrich you is only a waste of time and money. As you consider each subject, determine how it fits with your priorities and how it will help you meet your objectives.

* *

Eileen: Portfolio in PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURES

Learning Background: As vice president of her community college student council, Eileen participated in and occasionally conducted monthly meetings; chaired many PTA committees and monthly business meetings; served as PTA president and vice president for two years each; served as clerk and committee chair in her church's ruling body; was active in two women's clubs; and chaired the board of trustees of a psychiatric hospital.

Knowledge Gained: Conducting and participating in meetings under Robert's Rules of Order; types of motions, amendments.

Evidence: Photocopies of newspaper articles, certificates, program booklets, minutes from meetings, letters of verification.

Lorraine: Portfolio in HOME DECORATING

Learning Background: Planned and implemented decorating and furnishing of eleven homes and offices for five doctors and a business executive.

Knowledge Gained: use of space, lighting, color schemes, budget, styles, accessories, period decor and usage patterns.

Evidence: Photographs of her decorating projects, plans, drawings and notes.

* *

APPLYING FOR PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT

Once you send in your Application for Portfolio Assessment,* portfolio advisors are available to guide you in putting together your portfolios. Advisement services will help you ensure that:

* The subjects you choose are well matched to your degree program or other educational goals
* Your course selections accurately reflect your areas of knowledge
* The narrative you submit is appropriate and complete
* The evidence you provide is sufficient to prove your learning
* The format of your portfolio is correct

Portfolio advisors are available to answer questions and offer assistance either by phone or through in-person appointments. Office hours are listed in the current Portfolio Assessment brochure.

* The Application for Portfolio Assessment can be found in the Portfolio Assessment brochure.

LOCATING COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

Once you have pinpointed the right subject areas, you can start choosing course descriptions to match them. Each subject area for which you are seeking credit needs an accompanying description of an actual course taught for college credits.* This is an important part of your portfolio because it gives the assessor:

a) proof that the subject is college-level

b) an indication of its credit value

c) a summary of the knowledge you claim.

Since each description you pick will serve as the standard for measuring your learning, your catalog search should be as thorough as possible. You have hundreds of catalogs to choose from; nearly any course taught at a regionally accredited college or university can be used. Exceptions are physical education, practicum, field experience or student teaching courses.

Your portfolio advisor also can direct you to course descriptions which are already part of the Edison State College course data base. The College's course data base includes thousands of course descriptions covering a broad range of topics. We encourage you to consult this source first, prior to conducting your search for course descriptions.

In reviewing your portfolio, the assessor will expect your knowledge to cover **every topic** listed in the course description you provide. Therefore it is essential that your knowledge and the course description match.

Edison State College students are required to secure approval of credit requests from a Program Advisor prior to developing and submitting the portfolio to the Office of Testing and Assessment.

* The "Worksheet" on page 21 has been included for your convenience in selecting the most suitable courses.

Variation in Course Content

The following course listings, taken from actual college catalogs, describe three courses with the same name but different content:

COMMUNITY HEALTH
Organization and function of community health agencies and their relation to the school and community health programs. Includes discussion on chronic and communicable disease, pollution, sanitation programs, accidents, food handling and preservation, and consumer health. — College X

COMMUNITY HEALTH
Students specializing in community health will learn about health planning, safety education, environmental health, health counseling and other subjects which will help prepare them for employment in a variety of health agencies. — College Y

COMMUNITY HEALTH
A basic course focusing on major health problems currently affecting the local, state, national and international scenes and includes consideration of political, social and economic factors. Special attention is directed to the public health organizations and agencies dealing with these health problems. — College Z

Vertical Courses

Pay attention to the courses listed next to or near the course that interests you because there may be a relationship between them. For example, sometimes these are **vertical courses** which build knowledge from one to another. The later courses in the sequence will rely on information from the earlier courses, as in the following series:

Calculus I 4 credits
The course begins with a discussion of functions, the limit concept and continuity. The concept of a derivative is introduced and the student learns to differentiate polynomial functions, rational functions and algebraic functions. The definition of an integral as a limit of a sum is linked to the concept of the antiderivative by the Fundamental Theorem of Calculus. The definite integral is used to find areas, volumes and arc length.

Calculus II 4 credits
(Prerequisite: Calculus I with a grade of C or better)
Transcendental functions are defined and the techniques for differentiating and integrating the logarithmic, circular and hyperbolic functions and their inverses are studied. Integration by parts, partial fractions and other more advanced integration techniques are studied. Improper integrals are introduced.

Calculus III 4 credits
(Prerequisite: Calculus II)
This course includes: vectors, vector functions and the use of linear algebra concepts; velocity, acceleration, partial differentiation, directional derivatives; multiple integration; surface and line integrals and infinite series.

Horizontal Courses

Sometimes courses grouped together are considered **horizontal**, related to one another but self-contained so that passing one course does not build on knowledge gained in a previous course. Two examples follow:

Example One:

American Civilization to 1865 (3 credits)
A comparative study of the principal North American nations -- the United States, Canada and Mexico — from colonization through the American Civil War period emphasizing the political, economic and social achievements of each.

American Civilization from 1865 (3 credits)
A comparative study of the principal North American nations -- the United States, Canada and Mexico -- from the turbulent American Civil War period to the present day emphasizing the political, economic and social achievements of each.

Example Two:

Survey of Theatre History I (3 credits)
The history of theatre from the primitive time through the baroque era. Examines major plays and playwrights, emphasizing the Greek, Roman, Medieval and Elizabethan eras.

Survey of Theatre History II (3 credits)
The history of theatre from the Restoration to the present time. Examines major plays and playwrights, emphasizing the Restoration, Romantic and Realistic movements.

In the second case, the sequencing of the two courses is strictly for chronological purposes. What you learn about the later period is not contingent on your knowledge of the earlier period.

Survey Courses

Some courses, usually titled "Survey of...." or "Introduction to...." are designed to give students an overview of a general subject area such as psychology, sociology, poetry or economics. Many of the topics listed under a survey course are likely to be subjects in their own right on an advanced level. Here is an example of a survey course and two of its topics offered as subjects on an advanced level:

Introduction to Psychology
The scientific study of human thought and behavior with an emphasis on experimental methods. Topics include: brain function, behavioral development, motivation and emotion; perception, learning, and memory; language and reasoning; personality; social psychology; abnormal psychology and psychotherapy.

Social Psychology
A review and analysis of theories concerning the individual as a member of social groups, and the applications of these theories to current social problems. To that end, social psychological perspectives on such topics as aggression and violence, the reactions of bystanders to emergencies, the problems of obedience and conformity, and the formation of attitudes that give rise to stereotyping, prejudice and scapegoating will be discussed.

Abnormal Psychology
An examination of the different patterns of abnormal behavior. Each will be examined from the perspective of such models of explanation as the psychoanalytic, behavioristic, humanistic, physiological, and cognitive models.

The first course teaches only the basics of a wide range of topics while the others teach one topic in depth. This is where recognizing the extent — and depth -- of your knowledge is invaluable.

Caution: Two courses may have different names but offer contents which are the same or overlap substantially. Avoid using both descriptions as the basis for separate credit requests.

Edison State College awards semester hours for all credits assessed through the portfolio method. Therefore, students are advised to use semester hour course descriptions for their portfolios.

* *

If your area of knowledge is so specific that it is not taught at most colleges, tracking it down may take a lot of time -- especially if it is new to your advisor as well. But sometimes your own expertise in the subject can be of help.

> **Example One:** You have resided in the same locale for many years, and are well-versed in the area's rich history. Check your community college catalog for a course in "Local History."
>
> **Example Two:** You are an avid reader of Nathaniel Hawthorne and have read several of his biographies. Most colleges will not devote an entire course to Hawthorne, but a college in or near his birthplace might. Therefore, the first place to look is the catalog for a college located in Salem, Massachusetts, or others in the vicinity.

College catalogs often reflect the topics that most interest area students and teachers. Los Angeles colleges probably offer a wide variety of courses related to movies and filmmaking while schools in the Washington, D.C. area undoubtedly offer many types of courses on government. Before you start an extensive search, look to your own expertise to provide you with direction.

* *

* *

Regional Accreditation is a status granted to an educational institution that has been found to meet or exceed stated criteria of educational quality. It is voluntarily sought by institutions and programs and is conferred by nongovernmental bodies. It has two purposes: to assure the quality of an institution or program, and to assist in the improvement of an institution or program.

For the purpose of portfolio assessment, course descriptions must come from institutions which are accredited by one of the following regional accrediting agencies:

* Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools
* New England Association of Schools and Colleges
* North Central Association of Colleges and Schools
* Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges
* Southern Association of Colleges and Schools
* Western Association of Schools and Colleges

* *

WORKSHEET: HOW DOES YOUR KNOWLEDGE MATCH UP?

Once you have tentatively selected your course descriptions, check to see whether they truly reflect your knowledge and whether they can be documented. Carefully look at your course descriptions, topic by topic. Note your corresponding experiences, the learning you have acquired, and how you might give evidence of that learning.

Title of Course _____

Topics listed in course description	Your corresponding responsibilities	College-level knowledge gained	Evidence of your learning

SELECTING EVIDENCE

Evidence, the material you submit to document your claim of college-level learning, is the foundation of your portfolio.

Effective evidence does the following:

* provides direct documentation of your knowledge and skills
* pertains specifically to the topics in your course description
* supports the statements in your narrative about your learning experiences

In most cases, you will need to supply two types of evidence, **direct** and **indirect**, to justify your request for credits.

Direct evidence is documentation of your actual learning in a subject area. This includes: **a) samples of your work performance** such as reports or projects you have prepared or artwork you have created **b) official verification of your proficiency level** such as licenses or graded transcripts and **c) examples showing your actual accumulation of knowledge** such as notes you took during training or data you compiled for a class.

Indirect evidence is supportive documentation which clarifies your direct evidence by **a)** confirming that the work presented is actually yours or **b)** verifying details about your learning activities.

The following examples illustrate how the two types of evidence are used in combination to document the knowledge you claim:

Example One:

> Your direct evidence of college-level skill as a photographer includes four issues of your company newsletter which feature pictures you took. But you received no photo credits in the publication, so the samples are not identifiable as yours. A letter from the editor of the newsletter, stating that these pictures are yours, would serve as indirect evidence to verify the authenticity of your work.

Example Two:

> You completed a company-sponsored course in environmental law and can provide both an official transcript and a graded research paper as direct evidence that you passed the course. But since neither document indicates the length or content of the course, you need to include the syllabus, which gives the exact length of the course and the material covered, as indirect evidence.

Evidence of Training

The evidence you supply to document training should reflect all the basic information listed in your narrative: the amount of time devoted to the training, the material covered and the level of proficiency reached. Most important, your evidence must show what you learned from the training, not merely prove that you attended the training.

Training experiences are generally documented through some combination of the following:

* course transcript
  official course description or syllabus
* completed class assignments
* notes taken in class
  training manual, textbook or other literature used
  graded tests, reports or other work evaluations
  annotated bibliography or list of materials used
  certificate of attendance
  proof of enrollment
  diploma
  assigned reading list

(* indicates direct evidence)

Evidence of Work-Related Learning

The evidence you submit to document learning that occurred on the job must bear out the work-related skills or knowledge described in your narrative. Actual samples of your work are the strongest pieces of evidence you can submit, provided they can be verified as yours.

The following pieces of evidence, in varying combinations, are most frequently used to document learning related to paid or unpaid employment:

* reports, proposals or other material written on the job
  awards or citations
* blueprints, schematics, artwork or other work products
* military separation papers
  resumes
  letters from supervisors or employers
  licenses
* performance evaluations
  membership in professional or trade organizations
  newspaper or magazine clippings about your work
  description of job requirements
  description of license or certification requirements

(* indicates direct evidence)

Other Forms of Evidence

Activities including community service or personal accomplishments may be documented in a number of ways:

commendations
awards
newspaper and magazine clippings
letters of corroboration from co-volunteers, clients served, supervisors
a list of books read
an annotated bibliography
patents obtained
a list of countries visited
mementos from countries lived in and traveled
exhibits such as photographs, videotapes, etc.
programs from performances

Unavailability of Evidence

In some cases evidence of a student's learning either cannot be obtained or does not provide the assessor with enough information to make a decision. This is generally true of theory-based courses, where the real proof of your knowledge lies in how well you can demonstrate it in the narrative or an oral or written examination. It also may apply to skill-based courses, especially if you are self-taught and cannot provide employer or instructor verification. Documentation of your skill as a musician, for instance, might need to be supplemented by a live performance or video tape for the assessor.

If you and your advisor determine that a test or other demonstration is needed, you may request this upon submission of the portfolio. Portfolio Cover Sheets, which are included at the back of this Handbook, contain an area where you may note your preference.

* *

Obtaining letters of Verification

Letters from employers, work associates or community leaders who have first-hand knowledge of your involvement and abilities may be needed to verify your learning. Because these letters can be critical to the success of your portfolio, request them early enough to allow time for delivery, and be specific about what information the letter should include.

When you make your request, be sure the letter writer:

* knows that the purpose of the letter is for verification of your learning rather than recommendation

* explains the nature of his/her working relationship with you and the length of time it continued

* specifies what was expected of you and how well you accomplished those tasks or projects

* states his/her qualifications for commenting on your activities and expertise

* relates this information to your course description(s)

* comments directly and separately on each learning experience he/she has been asked to verify

Let the writer know when you will need the letter, but be prepared to follow up with a second request, possibly in written form, to serve as a reminder.

* *

WRITING YOUR NARRATIVE

The narrative is your means of conveying to the assessor that you know the material outlined in your course description. No matter how strong your evidence, it needs an equally strong narrative to put it in context and show its full academic value.

A successful narrative does the following:

* describes your knowledge of the subject
* specifies when, where and how you acquired the knowledge
* relates your learning to every topic noted in the course description
* introduces each piece of evidence you are presenting
* clearly shows the relationship between your evidence and the course material.

The content of your narrative will be studied carefully. Therefore, it is essential that you communicate your information and ideas effectively. This means organizing your narrative carefully, using clear, concise language and proofreading several times to eliminate errors. Do not hesitate to use jargon from your field of study, such as computer terminology, wherever it seems appropriate.

Length

The length of your narrative might vary from three to ten pages or more, depending on the type of course involved. The narrative for a theoretical course is likely to be considerably longer because you will need to show your understanding of the subject by discussing the theory or theories taught, their sources and applications.

A narrative is necessary even if you are requesting to take an examination. This will guide the faculty assessor in devising a suitable exam.

Other factors may also affect the length of your narrative: the subject area, the quantity and type of evidence, the complexity of your knowledge. You should write as much as you need to build a strong case for receiving credits.

Organization

A well-organized narrative gives the assessor easy access to the information needed to make a decision about your knowledge of the course material. Most narratives are organized in one of two ways: **a) chronologically**, citing each learning experience in sequence, or **b) topically**, discussing each topic within the course separately and grouping the learning experiences according to topic. To determine the best method of organizing your narrative, review and summarize all the information you will need to present. Note the following examples:

Course: Color Photography
Topics: taking photographs/darkroom techniques
Learning experiences:
Took photographs of vacations, nature scenes
Eventually bought good camera with adjustable settings
Read several articles on photography
Learned simple black-and-white developing and printing techniques from friend with a darkroom
Took photos for church newsletter
Read one book, five articles on color photography
Set up own darkroom
Made color portraits of family and friends as gifts
Sold color photograph to sports magazine

Even in an informal summary, this information seems to organize automatically into a chronological narrative. Once the evidence is referenced and the summary is fleshed out into full, detailed sentences, the piece will be nearly completed.

The following body of information, on the other hand, seems to fall neatly into a topical arrangement:

Course: Comedy Writing
Topics: writing skits/jokes/comic verse/parody
Learning Experiences:

Skits	Two skits performed in annual PTA show
	One skit performed by local theater group
	Five scripts submitted to "Saturday Night Live"
	Read one book, four articles on skits and comic plays
Jokes	Three jokes sold to stand-up comics
	Five humor columns published in local paper
	Speeches for two school board "roasts"
	Read two books, one article on joke writing
	Read two books on speech writing
Verse	"Happy Birthday, Dear Barbie" published in local paper
	Greeting cards for family and friends
	Read works of Odgen Nash, Edward Lear and others
Parody	"Cujo, Come Home" published in humor magazine
	"Ram-Beau Geste" published in literary magazine
	Four movie parodies submitted to humor magazines
	Read two articles on parody writing

Whether your narrative is organized chronologically or topically, each source of learning needs to be described thoroughly. If your knowledge came from both formal training and work experiences, discuss the training first and then its on-the-job application.

Training includes any type of instruction, from formal data processing classes at a corporation to informal coaching in photography from a friend to calligraphy techniques that you taught yourself by studying books. Recreating these experiences in detail will help the assessor understand how you acquired

your knowledge. Wherever applicable, be sure to note the following:

* the nature of the training
* where you took the training
* purpose of the training (job-related, for certification, etc.)
* methods used (classroom, lab, tutoring, etc.)
* books, manuals, films or other materials used
* assignments given (reading, projects, problems, etc.)
* means of evaluation (tests, class participation, reports, etc.)
* length of time spent on training

The more of these facts you can provide, with evidence to back them up, the more easily you can build a case for receiving credit. But less formal training experiences usually do not yield this much clear-cut information, so you will need to substitute other facts. For example, if your training program did not include a testing or grading component, which is true of many seminars and conferences, a certificate stating that you attended the event will not prove you learned anything.

To strengthen your claim, discuss the topics covered in detail, mention any occasions where you applied what you learned and introduce any handout materials you received or notes you took as evidence.

Work experience applies to any job you have done — whether it was for money, for community service or just for fun — which produced knowledge of the course material. Be sure that for each experience you note the following:

* name of the company or organization
* name and title of your supervisor
* a summary of your position, including all duties and responsibilities
* number of persons you supervised and their duties
* explanation of how it contributed to your learning the course material

Introducing your evidence within the narrative is essential because unless you identify it and clarify its place in your learning process, your documentation may wind up being confusing or meaningless to the faculty assessor. As an easy reference point, try to label each piece of evidence (such as "Attachment #1, #2, #3...." or "Exhibit A, B, C,...."). Not only will this help the assessor check for evidence quickly while reading through your narrative, but it will make your job easier when you review the narrative to ensure that it accounts for each piece of documentation.

There are several ways to introduce your evidence. If your learning experiences are not very numerous, you may prefer to outline them first. You would then discuss the evidence, and how it relates to your knowledge, separately. If you have a substantial number of experiences, it may be simpler to cite the corresponding evidence where it fits into your discussion. The following are two examples of evidence introduction:

Example One:

As evidence of my ability to create and manipulate data with dBase III plus, attachment #3 is a copy of a program I created for my company in 1984. The program allowed me to search for specific data and print a variety of material used for annual reports, for projecting our growth and for tracking.

Example Two:

I learned the basic principles and theories of personnel management in a Wyatt Corporation training course to which my company sent me in 1986 (Exhibit A - course outline). The 60-hour course, called "Personnel Management Techniques," used lectures, videotapes and classroom discussions. Performance was graded pass or fail on the basis of classroom participation and a final examination (Exhibit B - graded test) and I received a passing grade (Exhibit C - official transcript).

SAMPLE NARRATIVES

Your learning as described in your narrative should match the course description selected. The narrative, then, should refer directly to the items or subjects in the course description. It is important to write a thorough narrative as well. The two sample narratives below are seeking credit for the following speech course.

The first narrative obviously is much too brief, but more importantly, it has little to do with the topics in the course description. Conversely, the second narrative closely matches the course description.

SPEECH (SPE)
SPE 101 Effective Oral Communication 3cr.
This course is an examination of the process of spoken communication, with an emphasis on small group interaction. It includes public speaking experiences, problem-solving techniques and approaches to discussion. Audio and video recording equipment is available for use in the course.
Prerequisite: None

* * *

SAMPLE #1

For many years, one of my main goals was to become a good public speaker. It was always hard for me to speak in front of people, especially after I got promoted to a job where I had to speak to groups of people almost every day.

After taking a public speaking course at my company, I felt better about speaking. But I wanted to keep improving, so I took the Dale Carnegie course two years ago. It changed my life. I got over being nervous about speaking and learned how to handle myself in any situation. Now I can give better presentations at work, and I have enough confidence to pursue a college degree.

* * *

SAMPLE #2

My claim for the course of Effective Oral Communication is based upon my current position of Corporate Training Analyst with the Health Company of Montana (Attachment A - letter/job description from supervisor) and an in-house course I attended on Effective Presentations (Attachment B - class notes).

My work experience began in May of 1987 when I was promoted to training analyst. I was one of three analysts whose main responsibility was to present customer service training to new hires and current employees who successfully bid on customer service positions. Our class size is approximately ten people, although I have presented to classes as small as two people and as large as twenty or more.

After six months in the training department, the two other analysts left, and I therefore became the customer service administrator. The responsibilities in this position are to plan and implement all customer service classes, decide on class content, revise training materials, and preview any new materials that become available. I must also work very closely with area management to ensure that the classroom knowledge is relevant to the job.

In mid-1977, I attended an in-house course entitled "Effective Presentations." Although only a two-day course, it gave me many tips on making an effective and professional presentation. We were videotaped during each presentation. This was then played back and reviewed by each participant and the trainer for self-analysis and any constructive criticism she was able to offer. There were several presentations I was required to make, beginning with a short two-minute presentation and ending with a fifteen-minute presentation of my choosing.

Several of the techniques learned during this course and during my two years of teaching include the following:

The importance of eye contact. I feel this is one of the most useful techniques. It is very important to look directly at one member of the audience for a period of approximately five seconds, state a complete thought, and then move to another individual in the audience. By the end of the presentation, I will have covered all areas of the room. This technique accomplishes two things. First, it gives the impression to the members of the audience that I am speaking to each one of them individually. Secondly, I find I become less nervous and am able to think more clearly.

Use of the hands. The effective use of the hands emphasizes what you are saying. During the course, I also explored how the incorrect use of the hands can give unspoken messages that I may not wish to convey. For example, by overgesturing, I appear nervous. If I do not make any use of my hands, I appear stiff. If I cross my arms in front of my chest, I appear defensive. If I put my hand on my hip, a very feminine gesture, I may lose some of my credibility with a group comprised mainly of men. The correct procedure is to keep the arms at the side, raising one or both hands to emphasize a point, and then dropping them to the side. This conveys to the audience a person who is assured, in control, and interesting.

Correct stance. Rocking back and forth on the heels or pacing across the room conveys nervousness or impatience. Women very often shift their weight to one leg, which again is a feminine stance. The best technique, it was noted in the course, is to stand evenly on both legs, without moving around. However, I find I present more effectively by using the room. I prefer setting up the tables in the room in a horseshoe shape which allows me to approach each member of the group. I feel I establish a closer relationship with each trainee. This is very important because much of the training I provide is based on group interaction and open discussion. By approaching each member of the group, I make them feel more comfortable with me and allow them to enter into group discussions.

However, if I must completely control the class, and wish only limited group interaction during a lecture, I always stand in front of the class and remain as stationary as possible.

Use of the voice. A monotone voice is very dull to listen to and does not hold the audience's attention. In contrast, if I were to speak with great emphasis all the time, my class would also lose interest. I would seem over-enthusiastic and very irritating. I generally speak at a normal rate and tone, modifying my voice for more emphasis when needed.

I also find that silence is a powerful tool. Initially, I felt very uncomfortable with silence, and felt I had to speak at all times. However, I learned that short periods of silence, lasting from several seconds to a minute or so, is generally appreciated by the audience. This allows them to absorb what I have said, or to write notes. In addition, this gives me time to gather my thoughts so that I am assured that I have covered all necessary points.

Use of equipment and visual aids. When any of these are used to present material, they should be a part of the presentation and should not get in the way of the presenter. For example, I stand with a flip chart to my left, and use my left hand to turn the pages. Therefore, I do not turn my back to the class. Also, I find that pictures on a flip, rather than words, are more effective to emphasize a point. I use overheads in the same manner. While they generally do not contain pictures, they should emphasize what I am saying, and should not direct attention away from me.

Planning. In my customer service classes, my material must be well planned and presented in such a way as to be easily understood by each and every trainee. My class plans, which I can present as evidence, show my meticulousness with subject continuity. Without this continuity, my presentations would be very confusing and my students would be unable to follow my train of thought.

Therefore, I make it a point to be very well prepared. After I have reviewed all my materials and class plan, I do a dry run and note anything I may have missed at this time. I find this allows me to be as fluid as possible. I allow short pauses during the lecture to answer any questions or if necessary, to include any points I may have missed, before I go on to the next point.

Fostering understanding. Since all the material will eventually be used on the job, it is critical that each trainee fully understand each point. Therefore, I stop several times during my lectures to question the trainees on certain points, and use role plays. These techniques can be used to promote class discussion because it allows the class to become actively involved. If any trainee seems uninterested or shy, these methods allow them to enter the discussion. It is important that I do not force anyone into the conversation; since this can make the trainees reticent to join the discussion for fear of embarrassment. I usually speak privately to any individual who refuses to take an active part in the class and we discuss how these problems can be overcome.

Overcoming problems. One of the most difficult problems I face as a small group speaker is dealing with a person who openly tries to contradict me. Usually these people fall into one of two categories. One type is the person who feels well versed in the particular subject. Occasionally, I find they are misinformed or have little understanding how this point relates to customer service. They are generally current employees who have come from other departments and are used to doing things in one particular manner. The other type of person is one who has no desire to attend the class. While I do not see this type in my customer services classes, I do have this type in my classes that teach new job skills to current customer service representatives. They are generally fearful of changes and are trying to find reasons why these changes are a poor idea. I have found several ways to handle successfully both types of people.

First, if I am in the wrong, I admit it, openly, and without excuses or embarrassment. A combination of humor and grace clears the air and allows the discussion to continue. Of course, I can do this only a few times without losing my credibility, and it is imperative that I come to each session well prepared.

If, however, I know I am correct in what I am saying, I need to reinforce it. My first inclination may be to defend myself.

However, I find this results only in further alienating the rest of the audience. Chances are, there are others in the group who feel as I do, and I can call on these people to agree openly with me. In this manner, the group renders its own form of chastisement and is more effective in keeping the individual at bay.

Finally, if all methods have no positive result, I advise the individual that I will speak to him or her privately after the session. This allows me to continue with the class. Later, we can air our differences, and the individual can be advised that this form of behavior is unacceptable. In the few times that I had to resort to this method of control, I found that the person in question was not aware of the disruptiveness, and we were able to settle our differences amicably.

Humor. Finally, one of the most effective and interesting communication techniques is the use of humor. It helps maintain audience attention and can be used to emphasize a point. I usually find that a few simple humorous phrases during the course of the discussion is enough to hold their interest and also fosters group interaction. Without it, the material would be extremely dull and many points would be missed because of a lack of interest in the class.

As a result of the above statements and the evidence I have presented, I feel I have acquired the knowledge needed for effective oral communication. Therefore, I feel I can claim the three credits for this course.

* * *

Each of these two narratives tells a different story. The author of the second piece seems far more knowledgeable about the subject matter and gave a more convincing explanation as to how it was learned and is now being applied. In fact, the first narrative does not show that the author learned anything about oral communication except to stop fearing it. The piece was far too short, vague and simplistic to make an adequate case for receiving credit.

However, length does not guarantee that a narrative is comprehensive enough to make a compelling argument for receiving credits. This is illustrated by the following piece, submitted by a student seeking three credits for a course in business law. The author seems familiar with the subject matter, judging from the lengthy discussion of several topics, but the narrative lacks vital information about when, where and how this knowledge was acquired. The narrative also does not make reference to any evidence. Without a clear picture of the applicant's learning process, the assessor cannot be certain that the knowledge is authentic, or that it is substantial enough to warrant a credit award.

* * *

Sample #3

> **BUS 202 BUSINESS LAW. A study of selected traditional areas of the law that affect the commercial community. Includes law of contracts, commercial paper, agency and employment, personal property, and bailments. The course is designed to give students an awareness of legal problems encountered in business transactions and of circumstances which require legal assistance.**

Based upon my past experiences and independent studies, I would like to apply for three semester hours in the area of business law. The following paragraphs will describe my knowledge and experiences.

Through independent studies and past experiences in local government, I have been able to differentiate between various forms of contracts. A contractual promise is a promise expressed in writing that is binding in court. Along with the contractual promise are: express contracts, implied in fact contracts, quasi-contracts, bilateral contracts, valid contracts, unenforceable contracts and serviceable contracts.

A contract is defined as a promise contained in an agreement between legally competent parties supported by the consideration and in pursuance of a lawful purpose. Therefore, the four essential legal elements of a valid contract are (1) valid offer and acceptance, known as a mutual consent form; (2) consideration; (3) legally competent parties; (4) lawful purpose.

Some examples of the many types of contracts are as follows: An express contract is considered to be either written or spoken mutual assent by the parties. An implied in fact contract is one in which the parties

demonstrate assent through their conduct. A quasi-contract may be considered implied by a court of law when in reality there is no express contract or implied in fact contractual agreement. This kind of contract simply implies the spirit of the law by the parties as a way of preventing one party from being unjustly enriched at the expense of the other. A bilateral contract is an exchange of mutual promises. A valid contract is one that meets all of the legal precedents and is enforceable. An unenforceable contract is one that meets all the requirements of mutual assent, consideration and competency of the parties, and is in fact pursuant of a lawful purpose, but does not meet other legal requirements; it is not enforceable.

A void contract has no validity. A voidable contract is one that is non-binding on one party. An executed contract is completely performed by both parties. An entire contract, or "whole contract," is one which is also performed by both parties, and in which no provision can be separated or severed from the rest without destroying the basic intent of the parties.

In further studies, I have learned about the acceptance, requirements, elements, and termination of a valid offer as well as the elements and acceptance of uniform and commercial codes, in consideration of their legal capacity with all of the sub-headings to be attached to them. I have learned about the legality of contracts, their purpose, and the effects of legalities on a contract, as well the contracts and statutes of frauds. This leads me to third-party contracts, rights, discharges and remedies if a suit is to be filed.

There are many steps in the legal procedure concerning partnerships. Individuals must be familiar with unions as well as the Uniform Commercial Act with the subheading under partnerships. The creation of a partnership entails rights, duties and liabilities of partners to each other along with authority to bind other partners. When the partnership grows to include another person, third-person party rights and liabilities must be considered too. Everyone always wonders how to end the partnership legally.

When partners decide to expand their business, they usually form a corporation. In this case, an organization is created under state law for legal purposes. Shareholders are separate from the corporation; however, the corporation can be sued, initiate suits, and conduct business. It is entitled to do business by state law, the United States Constitution and the first ten amendments, known as the Bill of Rights.

All corporations must be listed publicly, privately, and quasi-publicly because listing has a great deal to do with a corporation's financing.

Incorporation starts with a promoter who acts as a spark in a fiduciary capacity and represents the corporate liability. Before everything is stated, articles of incorporation must be filed with the Secretary of State, naming the corporation, office location, purpose of the corporation, information on capital structure and stock issues, corporate registered agent, and addresses of the incorporators. In addition, all signators agree to adhere to the state's bylaws.

Corporate officers and directors are elected, inheriting certain responsibilities with their new titles. These will be discussed briefly. A director's powers are limited by the state and by the articles and laws of the corporation. A unanimous vote is a requirement for all major decisions and proposals.

The director of a corporation has four functions: (1) to protect the assets and interest of all the stockholders; (2) to enforce the articles of incorporation and the bylaws; (3) to see that the company is well-managed and following sound policies; (4) to delegate responsibility to the officers for paying dividends, arranging mergers and pricing corporate stock.

My final chapter will discuss the area of debt securities. There are many listings for debt securities, such as bonds, notes, treasury bills, and commercial paper.

Bonds are long-term IOUs issued by corporations or federal, state and local governments to borrow funds. Most funds and bonds have an initial maturity of fifteen years or more. Most bonds pay interest twice each year for the life of the bond, with the principal amount repaid when it matures. They are secured by the financial strength of the borrower as well as by certain assets that are used by and for collateral and by the taxing power of the state and local government. Although bonds are frequently bought for income, they are used as collateral and are considered a very exciting investment vehicle that can provide a lot of price action.

Notes are intermediate-term debt obligations issued by corporations and governments. They generally have an initial maturity of one to seven years. Like bonds, they are backed by the financial strength of the issuers.

Treasury bills are financial instruments issued by the United States Treasury. An individual can buy them for one year or less. Most Treasury bills have a maturity of three to six months. The fact that they are issued in denominations of $1,000 to $10,000 or more precludes some investors from buying them directly. The large denominations and high market interest rates have contributed to the development of money market funds.

Commercial paper is a short-term unsecured promissory note issued by the leading businesses and financial concerns. It generally has a maturity of ninety days or less and is issued in denominations of $25,000 or more.

The field of business law is very important in the everyday duties of corporate as well as domestic life. It is my sincere hope that, with self-study and experiences with businesses in the legal field, the portfolio assessment program will award me the three semester credits I seek. I have enjoyed this study because it opened my eyes to the different areas of the legal profession.

* * *

Despite its shortcomings, Sample #3 has at least some potential. The wordiness can be corrected and, assuming the author's claim is valid, the text can be revised to cite the source of the learning and its proof. Knowledge is acquired in a particular context. How, when, where, and sometimes even why a person learns are important in an assessment.

The following narrative, however, seeking three credits for a course in the Comedies of Shakespeare, is beyond repair. It falls hopelessly short of the mark.

* * *

Sample #4

> What more can be said about Shakespeare, the greatest playwright of all time? I have read all of Shakespeare's comedies at least five times and can write a synopsis of any one that you choose.

* * *

In contrast, the following sample scores well in every area. Not only do the descriptions of learning and evidence match up well to the course descriptions, but the author describes them with clarity and coherence.

* * *

Sample #5

> **COBOL I 3 credits**
> A first course in computer problem solving and applications programming using the COBOL language. Students will progress from programming elementary report programs through control break logic.
>
> **COBOL II 3 credits**
> A continuation of COBOL with emphasis on more advanced programming techniques. This course covers program design, sequential file merging and updating, table handling and program debugging. Programming exercises provide the mechanism for implementing the lecture material.

My claim for credit for the courses of COBOL I & II is based upon my successful completion of continuing education courses at Z University, College X, personal readings and my actual work experience as a COBOL programmer.

My work experience started in 1977 when I secured a position as a computer operator at XX Corporation. Although my employed starting position was computer operator, I was able to get hands-on experience as a COBOL programmer. Through in-house, on-the-job training I gained entry level

skills as a COBOL programmer. The corporation's work was a service bureau type of operation wherein I wrote mostly data entry programs for health insurance companies. I was given report programs and data validation programs to write that would be run under XXX hardware. To facilitate my programming work, I used a COBOL programming generator package.

My formal training in COBOL started at Z University in the Continuing Education department in 1980. The course titled, "Computer Programming Concepts - COBOL Oriented," was an accelerated course in programming and data processing. The main objective of the couse was to teach the fundamentals in structured COBOL programming. As evidence of this course I am enclosing a course description, class notes, textbooks used and the course outline. A transcript proving my successful completion of the course is included.

Although the above course provided me with a good foundation to continue my career in data processing, the course in itself was not enough to secure a programming position in the field. In March of 1980, I was admitted to the College X Programming Training program. This intensive eight month series of courses proved to be the educational requirement I needed to secure a job as a COBOL programmer. The two courses that I wish to highlight in this claim for credit from College X's intensive program are COBOL I and COBOL II. In these 36-hour courses (each course is 36 hours), I learned all of the concepts and practical aspects of COBOL programming. Each lesson was highlighted by programming assignments that were handed in and graded. The programs that I wrote were also tested and debugged on an IBM mainframe that each student had an account on. I will say that these two courses provided me with good hands-on experience in COBOL programming. As evidence of this course, I am enclosing a letter from College X evidencing that I successfully completed the training program along with the COBOL course outlines. A copy of my College X certificate is included. Also enclosed as evidence are my class notes for COBOL 1 and COBOL II.

After completing my training at College X, I secured a position as a COBOL programmer for the ABC corporation. This entry-level programming assignment allowed me to program a human resource application that ran on hardware. Additionally I got more familiar with a COBOL programming generator package that enforced my training of structured programming. As evidence of my employment at XXXXXX I am enclosing a copy of an employment letter that was forwarded to me. Also while employed at ABC, I was able to attend a training course for which I am enclosing the course outline. I am also enclosing copy of my certificate that proves I successfully completed the course.

As my career progressed, I was anxious to try to create a business of my own in the software field. I created business cards representing my skills on XXX hardware and COBOL programming abilities. I was able to secure a contract with a medium-size metals manufacturer that was using COBOL for their business applications. As evidence of this contract, I am enclosing a letter from the corporation and a couple of programs that I designed, coded and implemented for their use.

Within the programs I am noting some important steps that I wish to highlight which proves my advanced level of the programming language.

Additionally, I am enclosing as evidence a copy of a contract with its terms on another contract that I secured. This large manufacturer of switches, who is a subsidiary of the XYZ corporation, employed my services as a COBOL programmer to create a salesman tracking system.

Because my evidence for this claim for credit is extensive, I would like to summarize the evidence into two sections. Section One documents my experience and performance as a COBOL programmer. Section Two gives direct evidence of my formal training in the COBOL programming language, not only in the academic environment, but also in the real business world. This combination allows me to claim credit for these courses.

Evidence List

I. Documentation of Experience and Performance

Attachment I-A	Resume of work experience of my data processing career.
Attachment I-B	Job letter from the XX Corporation stating that I worked for the corporation as a programmer in their Human Resources Department.
Attachment I-C	Letter from XYZ that highlights my consulting services for the company.
Attachment I-D	COBOL programs that are direct evidence of my knowledge of the programming language. Within the programs are notes that refer to I-E (below).
Attachment I-E	Explanation of notes from I-D (above).
Attachment I-F	A contract being used as evidence of a system I developed for the ABC Corp. Additionally, the specifications for the assignment are also enclosed.

II. Documentation of Training of the COBOL Language

Attachment II-A	Letter and course descriptions from the program at College X.
Attachment II-B	Class notes from the above COBOL courses.
Attachment II-C	Copy of Certificate and course description of a training program I attended while employed at ABC Corp.
Attachment II-D	Copy of course description of the Z University course, Computer Programming Concepts - COBOL Oriented.
Attachment II-E	Copy of notes from the above course.
Attachment II-F	Copy of a promotional sheet from the developers of the COBOL generator package.

* * *

CHECKLIST

If you have followed the formula described in this handbook, and sought the help of your portfolio advisor as you worked, your portfolio is probably in order and ready for submission to the college. Remember, your portfolio advisor will review a draft of your narrative before final submission to offer a preliminary critique.

Scan the following list of basics for a good portfolio:

* The course description is from a regionally accredited college
* The evidence is organized to parallel the narrative and documents each claim you make about your learning
* The narrative explains your knowledge of each topic in the course description and accounts for each piece of evidence you submit
* Each page of the portfolio is typewritten, double-spaced and numbered
* All photocopied materials are clear and legible
* Documentation for each course or course cluster is packaged as a separate portfolio
* Your course has been approved, in writing, by a program advisor (for Edison students) or an academic dean/department chair (for students at other colleges).

Once you have satisfied each criterion, send your portfolio by certified mail or another certified delivery system, to your portfolio advisor at:

The Office of Testing and Assessment
Thomas A. Edison State College
101 West State Street, CN 545
Trenton, NJ 08625

When the College receives your portfolio, your advisor will review it to ensure that it has the basic requirements for submission — an appropriate course description, the narrative and relevant evidence, all packaged in the correct format.

If the portfolio is incomplete or seems inappropriate, your advisor will contact you and suggest changes or additions to improve it.

If the portfolio appears complete, it should then be ready for review by a faculty assessor. All portfolio bills need to be paid prior to this review.

SUBJECTS THAT CANNOT BE DOCUMENTED THROUGH PORTFOLIO

There are only a few types of courses that cannot be assessed through the portfolio process. These include courses in the following categories:

* physical education
* field work
* practicum courses
* internships
* cooperative education

In general, any course which consists of, or relies heavily on, field experience or work-site performance as a criterion for evaluating students cannot be used as the basis for a portfolio. However, the theory behind these subjects may be taught in a conventional classroom setting, and this type of coursework is appropriate for portfolio assessment. Try to locate a course description that stresses theory and/or techniques taught within the classroom.

Example: Carol worked for several years as a volunteer teacher in a remedial reading program. She taught grade school students, both one-on-one and in small groups, under the supervision and guidance of the school's reading specialist, psychologist and learning disabilities teacher. In addition to her practical experience, however, she attended two extensive training programs on testing, diagnosis and remediation techniques related to reading difficulties. She also read a great many books and journal articles. While her performance as a teacher could not be documented as equivalent to a practicum course in teaching, her portfolio advisor suggested she locate a theory-based course description for her portfolio. Ultimately, she earned three credits for a course called "Diagnostic and Remedial Techniques in Reading."

HOW CREDIT AWARDS ARE MADE

Your advisor will arrange for a consulting faculty member to assess your portfolio as soon as it has been accepted and your portfolio bill paid. The materials are then sent by UPS to the assessor, who reviews your request for credit and the narrative and evidence you have submitted to substantiate your claim of knowledge.

The assessor who reviews your portfolio will be a faculty expert who has taught the subject for which you are seeking credit. Therefore, your package of materials will be evaluated as though it were the body of work for an actual college course.

In evaluating your portfolio, an assessor takes the following criteria into consideration:

Directness: whether you have supplied direct evidence of your learning

Authenticity: whether you have proven conclusively the work submitted is actually yours

Quality: whether the caliber of your knowledge or skill is high enough to merit a passing grade in a college course

Breadth: whether the scope of your learning is substantial enough to equal the contents of a semester-length course of study

After reviewing your material, the faculty assessor may make one of three decisions:

1) Credit should be awarded
2) Credit should be denied
3) More information is needed to complete the assessment

A brief explanation of the decision will also be included. If credit is awarded for your portfolio, you will receive a credit award report stating that you have received credit for the courses indicated in your portfolios. At the same time, credit for those courses will be posted on your official transcript.

The Portfolio Evaluation Form used by faculty assessors is shown on the following pages.

PORTFOLIO EVALUATION FORM

Student's Name _____ Student SS # _____

Course Title _____ Semester Hour Credits _____

Please respond to the following questions in a few sentences. Feel free to use additional sheets as necessary.

1. To what extent have the course topics been addressed?

2. How has the student demonstrated knowledge of the course content? Elaborate on the nature and quality of the evidence.

3. To what extent does the student possess the knowledge covered in the selected course?

4. Describe one or more strengths of the student's portfolio.

5. Describe one or more weaknesses of the student's portfolio.

SAMPLE

* The student will receive a copy of this evaluation *

PORTFOLIO EVALUATION FORM
RECOMMENDATION

_____ _____
Faculty Assessor's Signature Date

_____ _____
Printed Name Affiliation

Please check one of the following recommendations:

_____ Credit Award _____ Credit Denial

_____ Unable to Determine; Follow-Up Required

If you have not recommended a credit award, please check all of the following that apply:

_____ evidence is inadequate
_____ narrative is too brief
_____ evidence does not support knowledge of topics in course description
_____ narrative is poorly written
_____ it is not clear how the knowledge was acquired
_____ evidence supports only a limited portion of the course content
_____ knowledge demonstrated is not college-level
_____ student's knowledge lacks the breadth of the course described
_____ student's knowledge lacks the depth of the course described
_____ student has not reasonably demonstrated authenticity of evidence
_____ selected course description is inappropriate; see attached description
_____ from: _____
Course Title Name of Institution

_____ other _____

_____ other _____

If you have required follow-up, what should the student do to be reconsidered?

_____ supply additional evidence, i.e.:_____

_____ take a written exam to cover topics:_____

_____ take an oral exam by telephone to cover:_____

_____ rewrite the narrative as such:_____

Recommended Reading (if applicable)_____

_____

SAMPLE

IF FURTHER INFORMATION IS REQUIRED

Sometimes a faculty assessor is unable to make a decision about awarding credit based on the contents of the portfolio. In those cases, additional information is requested through the student's portfolio advisor.

Students are generally asked to provide the needed information through one or more of the following methods:

* examination
* performance evaluation
* interview
* further documentation

Your portfolio advisor will notify you if further information is required. You will have 30 days to comply with the assessor's request. If the assessor determines that an examination is required, you will have 30 days to inform your advisor if you want the examination developed. After the examination is prepared, you will have another 30 days to take the examination after making arrangements with a proctor at an institution in your area.

Requests from assessors for more information are not subject to appeal.

APPEALING A DENIAL OF CREDIT

If you are notified that the assessor has denied credit for your portfolio, you have the right to appeal this decision. You will have 30 days from the date of denial to submit a written appeal.

These appeals are reviewed by a committee which makes the final decision on disputes over the awarding of credit. An appeal of credit denial will be reviewed provided that the student has: **a)** submitted it in writing **b)** filed it within the required time period and **c)** complied with any request from the faculty assessor for additional information or testing.

Appeals may be sent to:

Director of Testing and Assessment
Thomas A. Edison State College
101 West State Street CN 545
Trenton, NJ 08625

TIME FRAME FOR ASSESSMENT

The amount of time needed to complete your assessment will depend on a number of factors such as the type of courses you have chosen, the contents of your portfolio and even the time of year. On the average, once a portfolio has been accepted, the actual assessment takes approximately one to two months. However, the College cannot guarantee this time frame. If you need the credits by a certain date to meet a graduation or promotional deadline, plan ahead to allow ample time for your assessment to be completed.

While some delays are unavoidable, there are a few measures you can take to help ensure that your portfolio is assessed as rapidly as possible.

Double check each item before sending your portfolio. Missing materials, a poorly written narrative, inappropriate evidence or unverified information can delay an assessment for weeks or months. Checking the contents with your portfolio advisor as you prepare them is the best safeguard.

Allow for a lengthier assessment when submitting portfolios in the summer, or other periods when colleges are not in session. Some assessors are not available during these times, so your assessment is likely to take considerably longer.

Limit documentation to relevant evidence rather than padding your portfolio with extraneous evidence. Material used as filler will not make your case any stronger; it only makes a portfolio more time-consuming to review.

WHY OVER 90 PERCENT OF ALL CANDIDATES SUCCEED

Over 90 percent of our portfolio applicants are successful in their attempts to earn college credits. While this is about the same success rate as that reported by conventional colleges, we feel it represents a more impressive achievement for our students because they are directing their own course of education to a much greater extent.

No two portfolio candidates -- or their learning experiences -- are exactly alike. But we have found that the ones who achieve their credit goals usually have the following elements in common:

* **They have a realistic view of their knowledge and its academic worth.**

* **They research carefully to locate the course descriptions most appropriate to their learning and their educational needs.**

* **They pay attention to detail in gathering their evidence, preparing their narratives and organizing their portfolio materials.**

* **They seek help from their portfolio advisors and maintain communication regularly throughout the process to help ensure that their work results in a quality product.**

REGISTRATION FOR PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT

THOMAS A. EDISON STATE COLLEGE
OFFICE OF TESTING AND ASSESSMENT
101 West State Street, CN 545
Trenton, NJ 08625

Please print:

_____ ____ _____
First Name M.I. Last Name

___ - ___ ( )
Social Security # Day Telephone #

Have you ever submitted a Portfolio to Edison? ___no ___yes (Date _____)
Have you ever attended a Portfolio Workshop? ___no ___yes (Date_____)

Please indicate the primary reason for your interest in Portfolio Assessment:

_____ pursuing a degree at Edison
_____ pursuing a degree at another institution
name of institution _____
_____ credit banking for teacher certification
_____ credit banking for XXXXXXXXX _____
_____ credit banking for professional advancement
_____ other _____

ALL STUDENTS must read the following and sign below:

I understand that it is my responsibility to ensure that the credits I earn through the portfolio assessment process are applicable to my degree program, or that they are appropriate for my certificate/license/credit banking.

I also acknowledge that the information I submit to Thomas A. Edison State College in every portfolio is true and correct. I understand that willful failure to give accurate information is considered adequate grounds for dismissal from the College and for revocation of credits granted.

_____ _____
Student Signature Date

REGISTRATION FOR PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT: Page 2

COURSE REQUEST

For each course for which you are requesting credit, please indicate below:

a. the course title
b. number of credits
c. name of the college in whose catalog the course description appears
d. department in which the course is offered
e. year of the catalog
f. the page on which the description appears

Attach a photocopy of the description for each course listed. (You may use additional sheets, if necessary).

COURSE TITLE	CREDITS	COLLEGE	DEPT.	YEAR	PAGE

TOTAL NUMBER OF CREDITS _____

PORTFOLIO COVER SHEET

* Please duplicate a copy of this page for EACH COURSE submitted *

Thomas A. Edison State College
Office of Testing and Assessment
101 West State Street, CN545
Trenton, NJ 08625

(Please print)

Name _____ SS# _____

Address _____

_____

Day phone _____ Evening phone _____

Title(s) of course(s) for which credit is requested: Credit hours each:

_____ _____

Course description(s): Attach photocopy from catalog.

Please check A or B to indicate how you prefer to be assessed.

A)_____ a review of my evidence, with follow-up if necessary
B)_____ testing by:
_____ written exam
_____ oral interview
_____ performance evaluation

PORTFOLIO COVER SHEET

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Office of Testing and Assessment
101 West State Street, CN545
Trenton, NJ 08625

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101 West State Street, CN545
Trenton, NJ 08625

(Please print)

Name _____ SS# _____

Address _____

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Day phone _____ Evening phone _____

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PORTFOLIO COVER SHEET

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Office of Testing and Assessment
101 West State Street, CN545
Trenton, NJ 08625

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Name _____ SS# _____

Address _____

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@@@